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United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

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COMMITTEES:
AGRICULTURE
APPROPRIATIONS
ENERGY AND NATURAL RESOURCES
INDIAN AFFAIRS

Colonel Mark R. Himes
1616 Capitol Ave., Ste. 9000
Omaha, NE 68102

Dear Colonel Himes:

Drought conditions in the Upper Missouri River Basin create challenges for recreation areas near Lake Sakakawea, and I write to request your support in addressing this matter. Federal, state and local stakeholders collaborated on efforts to respond to similar challenges during a dry period more than a decade ago, and I hope we can generate a similar response in 2022 and beyond.

As you know, the Missouri River basin above Sioux City, Iowa received just 59 percent of average runoff in 2021, and 2022 begins with below average snowpack from Fort Peck to Garrison Dam. There is every reason to believe that we are in an extended dry period, with ramifications for infrastructure around Lake Sakakawea.

Persistent low water levels create problems for lake access. Several low water level ramps on Lake Sakakawea will need repair so they can be used in the coming year. Roads leading to those ramps also should be repaired. I am pleased to hear that Omaha district staff recently surveyed sites around Lake Sakakawea to determine the scope of this problem and make initial estimates of the cost to complete required maintenance activities.

During drought conditions more than a decade ago, the Corps worked alongside state and local stakeholders to implement a shoreline maintenance program and to manage camp sites and boat access to Lake Sakakawea. I believe we need a similar effort in 2022 and beyond. That is why I urge you to prioritize the repair of boat ramps and roadways identified in your recent survey at Lake Sakakawea. I also hope that you will coordinate with state and local officials to maximize efforts to maintain recreational areas around the lake. I look forward to working with you through my position on the Senate Energy and Water Appropriations committee to identify resources that could support additional improvements to recreation areas and infrastructure at Lake Sakakawea.

Thank you for your attention to this matter, and I look forward to working with you to make these necessary improvements.

Sincerely,



John Hoeven
U.S. Senator